

15 February 1954

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR:

I attended the 2 P.M. screening of the first print of OPERATION IVY film in Room 213, Atomic Energy Building, today. Those present included General Erskine, Marines, (ret.), and Mr. William Godel, of Defense; Jim Hagerty for the White House; an OCEB representative; and others. The director of information services for AEC, Mr. Morse Salisbury, was in charge, and also present was Mr. Robert Le Baron of AEC. It was announced by Admiral Strauss that there would be no mention of today's screening and the whole matter would be kept confidential so as to avoid publicity.

Admiral Lewis Strauss got the group together in his office after the screening to get their viewpoints. I expressed for you the view that CIA's interest was overseas in allied countries and in the Soviet and its satellites, but the main viewpoint as to whether the picture should be released or not would be the political considerations involved when the French, Italians, and others see it. I also raised the question of timing as to whether it should be released as proposed, in March, or should await a later date, say in May, because we are now coming to the end of the Berlin talks, have a new shaky Italian government in power, find EDC under attack, etc.

Hagerty said he thought the picture could be released but the question of timing needed to be studied. He regretted, he said, that there wasn't a showing of an atomic explosion so that the people who now know the atomic mushroom would see the much greater destructive power of the hydrogen bomb.

General Erskine asked if we shouldn't consider whether the public would want to see the effects of biological warfare, gas warfare, etc., if this picture is made public. Admiral Strauss did not believe so and there was no other discussion of this point.

The OCEB representative said that their interest, too, was the overseas effect and they, of course, wondered how it would fit in with the Presidential program, etc. Admiral Strauss asked that the people present return to their various offices and give a report to their chiefs with his request (Strauss's) that in the next day or two objections or concurrences be given. He said, however, no final action would be taken on a release date until after the Secretary of State and C. D. Jackson have returned to Washington.

I can imagine that people in Europe, our allies, may well be frightened by what they see so that they would certainly not want any hydrogen bombing of their countries, either by us or by the Soviet. And so fearful may they become that they would adopt the Russian proposal for destruction of atomic and hydrogen bombs and weapons rather than the offer of the President at the United Nations or the old Baruch plan. I believe we could lose to friends and allies on the very fear that we would use the weapon in their countries. Particularly would it seem to be debatable whether the picture should be released at this time when Italy and France are so confused by the world tensions.

Once the picture is released here it immediately is snipped overseas and released everywhere it is saleable so that it is not possible to have a United States use only.

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General Erskine raised the question as to whether anything in the picture would help the Russians and was told there was not anything that would help them. However, it is certain that a Russian thermo-nuclear scientist, seeing the picture, would be able to check the effect of this bomb as compared to theirs and would have some idea, which may be unimportant, of the various methods used in holding the tests.

While this meeting was on, Congressman Cole telephoned Mr. Strauss regarding a speech which Cole had submitted for clearance in which he states that the bomb wiped out an island. This fact, of course, has appeared in the press at various times and Mr. Hagerty expressed the belief that no great harm would be done except that people would say, "Why does the chairman of the Atomic Energy Committee have the right to release such information when no one else has?" and later when the picture is released the fact that Sterling Cole made the statement and now the picture confirms the fact might be undesirable. There didn't seem to be any strong feeling one way or the other.

RECOMMENDATION: That CIA oppose the release of the picture at this time or in the near future and have a study made of the effect such release will have on friend and foe in Europe. The release of this picture, notwithstanding Mr. Hagerty's favorable view, will certainly be "rattling the atomic saber," which the President recently asked not be done.

Herewith is a recommended letter to Mr. Strauss.

STANLEY J. GROCAN

Enclosure

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